The Reconstructionist

Voll. XIII. January 9, 1948 Tebet 27, 5708 No. 18

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dicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of
lael's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

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EDITORIALS

A TRULY EPOCH-MAKING CAMPAIGN

THE coming campaign for the United Jewish Appeal, which was decided on at the recent national conference of the participating organizations in Atlantic City, will be an unprecedented one in many ways. The sum determined on by the conference, more than double the vast sum that had been asked for in its latest drive, is itself unprecedented. To raise $250,000,000 for a Jewish cause is something that we would not have dreamed of even a few years ago. And this sum was accepted as the campaign's goal after mature deliberation and free discussion by a body of men representative of every section of Jewry, whether considered geographically or ideologically. It was accepted with extraordinary eagerness and enthusiasm by the very men on whom the burden of carrying it through will primarily rest. They all seemed aware that they were participating in an epoch-making historical event.

For not only is the amount sought for unprecedented; the occasion for it is unprecedented. The need for doubling this year the colossal sums asked for in last year's campaign, was not occasioned by any new pogrom or atrocities against Jews. The need to feed the starving, clothe the naked or shelter the homeless is no greater this year than last. If anything, the situation in this respect has somewhat improved. The occasion for the vast increase in funds demanded for the United Jewish Appeal is not an increase in Jewish misery, but an increase in Jewish opportunity. We have this year a God-given chance to strive for the permanent redemption of Israel from those tragic conditions that have made annual appeals for relief of Jewry abroad a continual necessity. Lest that opportunity be forfeited by our failure to take timely advantage of it, we are asked to contribute $250,000,000.

We must rise to the responsibilities imposed upon us by the chance to establish a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael. There are those among us who have opposed the idea of a Jewish state. We think they were wrong, but they were entitled to their opinion. Now, however, that the Assembly of the United Nations has accepted Jewish statehood in a part of Palestine as its solution of the Palestine problem and the problem of the Jewish DP's, we have no doubt that *all* Jews will want to see the new Jewish state enjoy security and prosperity, and reflect honor on the Jewish name.

The acceptance of so large a goal for the UJA was American Jewry's response to the new historic opportunities open to it, and the new historic responsibilities devolving upon it by reason of this grant of state-

hood. That is reflected not merely in the amount asked, but also in the allocation of the anticipated funds. For the first time, the sums allotted to Palestine exceed those allotted to European relief and the needs of Jewish immigrants in America. Not that the latter needs are to be neglected. Indeed, rising costs, the liquidation of the UNRRA and the inadequate sums allotted by governments to IRO make it necessary to raise the allocation for relief purposes to a figure in excess of what was required in 1947, but the greater part of the funds for 1948 will have to go to the defense of Eretz Yisrael against Arab aggression and to the provisions for large scale immigration and settlement in the new state. After the decisive role that America has played in securing statehood for the greater part of the Yishuv at the insistance of the American Jews, we dare not give too little or come too late to the successful launching of the Third Jewish Commonwealth.

The 1948 UJA campaign is thus the inauguration of a new era. It should be conducted in a way that will make American Jewry and the non-Jewish world aware that a basic change is taking place in the status of the Jewish people. The establishment, with UN approval, of a Jewish state in Palestine means that the Jewish people is to enjoy a status of equality with other peoples and to have a voice in the councils of the nations. Henceforth Jewish history is not to be a tale of what is done to Jews by others, whether in malice or in charity, but of what the Jews as an organized entity are doing for themselves and mankind. To achieve that new dignified status, American Jews should regard the expenditure of $250,000,000 for 1948 not only as a responsibility but as a joyous privilege worth the cost many times over. We are confident that, if American Jews are made aware of the full meaning of what they are this year asked to do, they will oversubscribe the amount requested.

But to make them aware of that meaning will require an effort proportionate to the vastness of the enterprise. It is easy even for unimaginative people to respond to appeals for the relief of physical suffering, but to respond to the call of the spirit for a collective creative achievement makes demands not only on sympathy but on understanding and imagination. Every effort at communal fund raising should be accompanied by educative activities conducted by Jewish schools, synagogues, community centers and all other Jewish cultural agencies, but we wish particularly to emphasize the importance of those activities in connection with the present campaign. Without such efforts, the campaign is almost certain to fail. With such efforts, amply supported and vigorously and intelligently pursued, not only will the campaign for funds be successful, but Jewish life in America will be given a lift that will raise the whole level of Jewish communal life. Jews will begin to understand something of what it means to be a Jew, not in terms of disabilities and annoyances, but in terms of participation in a movement that is making a unique and worthwhile contribution to the civilization of mankind. Jewish life will be purified from the "servility in the midst of freedom," the self-hate and the devastating sense of inferiority from which we have been suffering by reason of our previous lack of status. Statehood in Eretz Yisrael gives status to Jewry everywhere, for it recognizes the legitimacy of the struggle of the Jewish people to survive as a social, cultural and religious entity.

We are happy to learn of the projected pilgrimage to Eretz Yisrael of some 50 active workers in the UJA that they may see for themselves what is needed there and what American Jews can do to satisfy those needs. They will bring back with

them, we are certain, something of the *avera d'Eretz Yisrael,* the vital atmosphere of a Jewish people living in and fighting for its homeland and the Jewish future. That pilgrimage is a valuable educational endeavor. But it is only *one.* We recommend that, from the beginning, a fixed percentage of the money received by the UJA be devoted to public relations work which shall be more than merely propagandist in the usual hortatory sense. That work should be genuinely instructive and interpretative. We should like to see a flood of books, pamphlets, dramas, pageants, radio scripts, motion pictures, exhibitions, concerts and what not, all designed to express the significance of the cause in which the money to be raised shall be expended.

An unprecedented effort calls for unprecedented methods. We hope that the general staff of the campaign will give due weight to the need for making it yield the maximum of educative influence on the thinking, feeling and willing of our people.

DISUNITY IN THE NAME OF RELIGION

AT a recent meeting of the congregation Emanuel-El in New York, the membership present voted a resolution opposing the affiliation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, of which Emanu-El is a constituent, with the American Jewish Conference. The Union, declared the resolution, "should have no affiliation with any continuing organization engaged in the consideration of or action upon matters of a domestic or international character." This action was taken shortly after the American Jewish Conference voted to proceed with a plan for permanent organization. So long as the Conference was an *ad hoc* organization, the Union, apparently, was within its rights; but a "religious organization should not confer any . . . authority . . . upon any central organization" established on a permanent basis.

The philosophy underlying this action should be clearly understood. It asserts that, as individuals, or in groups organized for secular purposes, Jews may act in concert on matters of a domestic or international political character. When Jews, however, are organized in religious bodies, they must have no relation to such matters.

This point of view, it would seem, can lead to only one specific conclusion: that organized Jewish religion must keep itself completely aloof from all practical concerns, must detach itself from the basic issues that confront the Jews of the world in their struggle for survival, for justice. Those whose rights are jeopardized, those who are homeless, hungry and persecuted, those who wait for liberation and redemption might just as well realize that they can expect nothing from the organized religious forces of Jewry. The synagogues and temples, where the Torah is enshrined, should be silent and inert in the presence of social evil, of intolerance and hate, of injustice and cruelty. This is the role, it would appear, which the members of the congregation Emanu-El want religion to play in our world.

And yet, the congregation, to our knowledge, has never objected to the fact that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is affiliated with the Synagogue Council; and the Synagogue Council does concern itself with matters of obviously political character. It has agitated for Full Employment legislation; it has participated in public hearings of the Labor Management Council; and it has been represented at meetings of the Federation of Atomic Scientists on the

problem of atomic energy control. The Synagogue Council has recorded its views on a variety of social questions—and the Synagogue Council is a "continuing organization."

Perhaps, then, the congregation Emanu-El is not so strongly opposed to having organized religion act on political questions. Perhaps it is actually more concerned about giving organized religion the power to act alone on these matters. It is understandable that members of an upper class Temple might wish to dissociate themselves from the Jewish masses. But if that is the case, we come upon a basic question, namely: Is there to be a united Jewish people, or is there to be a Jewish people on the one hand, and a Jewish "church" on the other? Is affiliation with a religious organization to be the basis of Jewish unity, or is the unity of all Jews to be, as it has always been, an essential doctrine of the Jewish religion?

The merits or the demerits of the Conference and its plan for organization are quite beside the point in this issue. The Conference, through the action of the Emanu-El group, has now become the symbol of the struggle for Jewish unity. That unity must not be destroyed by those who wish to make specious distinctions between "religious" and "political" interests in Jewish life. It must not be endangered by those who want to speak in the name of all Israel, while denying that right to the representatives of *all* the people.

Under the directorship of Dr. Maurice Eisendrath, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations has been moving in the right direction. It should not be deterred by the action of the Emanu-El group, but should be spurred on by them to more vigorous activity in behalf of the unity of all Israel under the banner of true democracy.

NEW HORIZONS FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

FROM time to time, the problem of Jewish Education is aired at conferences with little better result than to afford their participants an emotional outlet for accumulated frustrations. But the recent Conference on Jewish Education, sponsored by the Rabbinical Assembly of America in cooperation with the United Synagogue and the Teacher's Institute, was an exception. The Conference opened new horizons around its central theme, "A Proposed Structure for Jewish Education in Conservative Judaism." With the American public school system absorbing so much of the pupil's time, it becomes necessary for Jewish education to invade new areas of the child's life into which it has not yet penetrated in a significant way. These the Conference revealed. There is, for example, the pre-school age during which spoken Hebrew can be acquired in the simplest of all ways, as has been demonstrated in nursery schools. There are the opportunities afforded by summer camps, both day camps and season camps. There is the possibility of a five day a week afternoon program which would, in addition to study, offer a number of creative leisure time activities with a Jewish emphasis. In underscoring these possibilities and refusing to satisfy itself with threshing old wheat, the Conference displayed bold, imaginative thinking. For such thinking, it is to be congratulated.

The ultimate fruitfulness of the Conference can be judged, of course, only by the measure in which the possibilities it projected in theory are realized in practice. But even should the plans outlined be fully realized, their success would, under present circumstances, reach only a small fraction of the Jewish child and youth population of America. That is

an anomalous situation. Organizations, Bureaus, Conferences, new techniques and projects for improving and intensifying Jewish education have multiplied exceedingly in the past few years. But almost all have been aimed at the present Jewish school population, a population which constitutes but a fourth—so it has been estimated—of all Jewish children and adolescents of school age. What of that hard core of seventy-five percent for whom Jewish education hardly exists?

To our mind, the heart of the problem is located here. The thinking, skill and resources of the leaders of Jewish education should therefore be directed towards attempts, bold and persistent, to solve this key problem. It is not a matter of choice between a more intensive Jewish education and a more extensive one. To pursue the former goal without equal concern for the latter is to seek to row a boat with one oar.

Here is not only a theme for future conferences but a present and persistent task for our Bureaus of Jewish Education. Winning the Jewish child for the Jewish school is no simple job in a child environment crammed with movies, comics, athletics, television, etc. If the present means—Jewish Education Month, Registration Rallies, etc.—have yielded meagre results, then new means must be found. Above all, this problem calls for careful study and a broad program fitted to meet the mind set of the Jewish parent who puts Jewish education at the very margin, if not completely beyond the verge of his child's interests.

Perhaps a page should be taken from the plans of the various bodies concerned with meeting the problem of anti-Semitism. Within the past few years, these organizations have appointed commissions manned by social scientists, psychologists, etc., to study the problem scientifically, and to bring in recommendations based on their findings. Would not a similar commission charged with the study of how to reach the child who never comes within the scope of Jewish education be in order? If our present efforts show some success in raising the level of our schools and improving techniques, have we not a right to expect that an all-out effort in the direction indicated might show a similar measure of success? Our line should henceforth be from the center to the periphery where the multitudes of Jewish children are now located.

REALITIES AND VALUES

The Zionist Organization of America has recently been circulating a short article by Elias M. Epstein, editor of the Jerusalem periodical, *Palestine Review,* in which the author comments on the absence of Americans from the present leadership of the Yishuv. Americans, he says, "are not to be found on the Jewish Agency Executive in Palestine, the Vaad Leumi, the Keren Hayesod or the Keren Kayemet Board of Directors, or even the American sponsored Hadassah Medical Organization."

He accounts for the diminishing part played by Americans in the leadership of the Yishuv as owing to American Zionism's preoccupation with the political and fund-raising activities which had to be carried on in America itself.

That is, no doubt, a correct explanation as far as it goes, but we suspect that a psychological factor is also involved. The effort at fund-raising frequently led to a playing down of the nationalistic implications of Zionism. It is only recently, for example, that the ZOA has stressed *halutziut* and *aliyah* in any form. American Zionists are suspected in Eretz Yisrael of being pro-Zionists rather than Zionists, sympathetic contributors to rather than

wholehearted participants in the Zionist movement.

A greater personal implication in the movement on the part of American Zionists is necessary to merit and obtain a significant share (more we ought not to demand) in the leadership of the Yishuv.

▼

ABDUL RAHMAN AZZAM Pasha, secretary-general of the League of Arab States, in a Christmas message said that the Arab League "which contains millions of Christians, hails the birth of Christ, who brought word of the gospel of peace."

A touching message if it were sincere! But the League of Arab States shows that it hails the birth of the "Prince of Peace" by sending men and arms into Palestine to commit plunder, arson and murder against the kinsmen of Jesus.

Ishmael and Islam still live by the sword. Let not the Arab League utter blasphemous praises of any gospel of peace. Whom do they think they fool?

▼

THE JEWISH CENTER IS AN American institution which is now finding its way into other countries as well. Recently the first Jewish Center in South Africa was organized in Johannesburg.

If the Jewish Welfare Board is successful in deepening as well as widening the Jewish influence of the Center, that institution may one day become as historically significant as the synagogue itself. It offers an attractive form of affiliation with the Jewish people and its spiritual heritage for many who, for economic, social and ideological reasons, do not feel at home in the synagogue of today.

▼

HISTORY IS NOT MADE UP ONLY of great events any more than a mountain range is made up of peaks. In interpreting the play of historic forces, historians avail themselves of vast accumulations of minute data.

Dr. Nelson Glueck, of Hebrew Union College, has recently announced an interesting project for which the future historian of American Judaism in our day is bound to be grateful. It proposes to establish the American Jewish Archives to collect all sorts of information about the day-to-day proceedings of Jewish congregations and other institutions.

Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, who has been appointed as its director, urges the congregations of America to send him "material, such as and including their minute books, constitutions, cash books, journals, ledgers, daybooks and other record books, including those of births, circumcisions, marriages and burials." To congregations that may not wish to part with such materials permanently, he offers to have photostatic copies made and to return the originals to the congregation.

A good idea this, and we hope the congregations will respond to the appeal.

▼

BENNETT CERF'S COLUMN IN the *Saturday Review of Literature* for December 27, 1947, contains an interesting item about the Christophers.

The Christophers are an organization which aims to "bring Christian principles back to the market place." They have recently offered $30,000 in prizes for books, fiction or non-fiction (1st prize $15,000, 2nd $10,000, and 3rd $5,000), and $10,000 for plays (1st prize $5,000, 2nd $3,000 and 3rd $2,000), all bearing on Christianity. Moreover, in addition to the prizes, the authors will receive whatever royalties accrue from the publication of the books, which, in view of the publicity that the awards will bring them, should be considerable.

We wish some Jewish institution or individual would do the like to stimulate creative Jewish thinking and writing on as generous a scale.

A Community System of Jewish Schools

By SAMUEL DININ

This is the first of two articles bearing on the problem of Jewish education from the viewpoint of the central coordinating educational agency of the community. The articles draw on the author's experience as Executive Director of the Los Angeles Bureau of Jewish Education, but they deal with questions which affect Jewish education all over the country. The second article, which will appear in our next issue will discuss the future development of Jewish education in the United States.

—EDITORS.

IF these articles are to be understood in their proper context, a prefatory word of explanation is needed. It is possible that no solution or combination of solutions, no matter how good they may be, *may* make any appreciable difference in the effectiveness of the Jewish education given to our children. For in the long run, the effectiveness of any system of Jewish education must depend on the quality and richness of Jewish life in the home and the community and on the extent to which the American environment offers encouragement to creative Jewish living or makes for alienation or loss of Jewish identity through assimilation.

There is widespread discussion today of the failure of the American public school. If the public school with its favorable position and its immense resources cannot do an effective educational task, what can be expected of the Jewish school with its many handicaps? The failure of the public school is an indication that general education too must depend for its effectiveness on the quality of the community's life and points to the fact that there are educational influences in the community, such as the movies, the radio, the press which, taken together, are more powerful than the public school.

Why Begin with a Discussion of the Community Setup?

This does not mean that the public school or the Jewish school does not possess weaknesses which contribute to its failure, nor does it mean that we should not attempt to overhaul our system in line with the needs and requirements of the present situation. It does mean, however, that all our efforts and all our proposed solutions may make possible a five or ten or even forty per cent improvement in the situation, but may still fall short of a real solution.

The implications of this conclusion are obvious. On the one hand, Jewish educators cannot afford to be too narrow or too parochial in their educational concerns. While working with the schools they must simultaneously concern themselves with the reconstruction and enhancement of Jewish life in the home and in the community. On the other hand, Jewish communal leaders, impatient with the progress of Jewish education, should be taught to understand to what extent the quality of American Jewish life affects the quality of Jewish education, and to recognize their own responsibilities for the quality of Jewish education. As Jewish educators we must strive, to the limits of our powers, to effect whatever improvements can be made in our schools and to work, within the limits of our occupations, with all communal Jewish leaders to improve the quality of Jewish life in our community and in the country as a whole.

Moreover, the devotion of this article to the subject of a community school system does not mean that the writer re-

gards the establishment of a community school system as *the* solution to the problem of Jewish education. He does not even necessarily consider it of equal importance with all of the other problems to be discussed in the second article. But to begin to improve our schools we must first try to establish the proper framework within which our schools can function effectively. We must try to solve the problem of the relation of school to community and of schools to each other, so that there will be no administrative, fiduciary and other impediments in the way of our attempts to improve the quality and to expand the scope of Jewish education. It is for this reason that the question of a community school system is being considered first.

The subject of a community school system has already been discussed publicly in Los Angeles and is receiving the serious consideration of the Bureau of Jewish Education and its affiliated schools. In the large communities such as Chicago and Philadelphia and particularly New York, which constitutes a problem and a world all by itself, the proposal may encounter serious difficulties, but communities smaller than Los Angeles, faced with the same problems and the same chaos, should find no insurmountable obstacles in the way.

The Need for a Community School System

By a community school system the writer means a system in which schools are conducted, administered and controlled by a central educational agency for the community as a whole. There is a tendency to confuse so-called "community" schools with a community school system. There are some communities which have one or more communal Talmud Torahs deriving almost their entire support from the organized community and administered by a Board responsible to the organized Jewish community. These are real community schools except that, for the most part, there is no community school system in those communities, because side by side with the communal Talmud Torah there exist congregational week-day and Sunday Schools and occasionally Yiddish schools which are not subject to communal control and supervision. In most of these communities the communal Talmud Torah becomes a school for the poor and for those few, who, though not poor, want an intensive Hebraic education.

The Diminishing Size of Our Schools

Our schools are for the most part very small and are getting smaller all the time. Los Angeles, for example, has fifty-four schools. The largest schools are Sunday Schools, not week-day schools. There are about a half dozen Sunday schools with an enrollment of over 100 pupils and an equal number of week-day schools with over 100 pupils. None of the week-day schools has an enrollment of over 200 pupils. The vast majority of our schools have from twenty-five to sixty pupils. The other communities may have a few Talmud Torahs which are larger, but the writer is of the opinion that the trend is the same the country over. Even New York has few schools with more than five hundred pupils, whereas a generation ago the large school was the rule and not the exception.

Small schools make for ineffective, inefficient and costlier education. The problems of grading, of maintenance, of attendance, of progress, of interesting the students, all are more difficult and complicated in a small school. Such schools are usually housed in poorer quarters and have a depressing psycho-

logical effect on pupils accustomed to attending public schools of considerable size, housed in large modern buildings, and making provision for a collective social school life.

In many neighborhoods several small schools exist side by side, none of them doing effective work, each competing with the others for neighborhood patronage.

Centralized control would make it possible to establish large central schools and to eliminate the small schools insofar as possible, particularly in neighborhoods with large Jewish populations.

Our Population Is in Constant Flux

In almost all of the large Jewish cities, there is a continuous shift of Jewish population from one neighborhood to another. New population centers grow up over night and old ones decline. Only a centralized educational agency with proper authority and power to plan on the basis of changing conditions can tackle this problem effectively. At present we operate on the basis of watchful waiting. We wait until a new center of population develops. Then we wait until a group emerges with a desire to establish a school. Then we wait until the group comes to us for advice and help. A centralized agency would be able to make periodic population surveys and surveys of neighborhood needs and to plan the opening of new schools and even the construction of new school buildings.

Fiscal Considerations

Most of our schools find it increasingly difficult to maintain themselves because of higher instruction costs and other expenses. No matter how good tuition fee collection is and no matter how considerable the subsidy from a central agency, most school boards still have to find funds to cover from twenty-five to fifty per cent of their school budgets. Los Angeles has adopted a Code of Practice for Teachers with a salary scale which begins at $2,400 for teachers with a temporary license and ends at $4,100 for teachers with thirteen or more years of teaching experience. Many teachers in Los Angeles who were entitled to their maximum salary got as much as a $1,400 increase in one year. Other costs, besides instruction costs, have gone up.

As a result, local school boards have to conduct ceaseless drives for funds to keep the schools going. Such campaigns dissipate the energies of the school boards and leave little time for constructive thinking along educational lines. These campaigns often constitute a nuisance from the point of view of the Welfare Fund of the community. The sums needed are small compared to the goal of the Welfare Fund, but the campaigns for these funds to cover school deficits, take away valuable workers, dissipate their energies and cause some of the contributors to neglect their larger duties and responsibilities to the Welfare Fund and to other important community campaigns. A centralized system which would have fiscal control of the schools would eliminate these difficulties to a large extent. This question will be discussed further on.

Further Benefits of a Community School System

Small schools often do not have enough teaching hours to make it possible to get a full time professional teacher. As a result many schools hire inexperienced, unlicensed teachers who are paid paltry salaries, or else, wherever there is some communal control, they are compelled to hire teachers for what is part-time work and pay them a full salary.

A community school system can provide for more effective use of available teacher resources by transferring teachers where and when most needed. Teachers under a community school system would also have more security and stability, inasmuch as responsibility for tenure would be backed by the community rather than by an individual school.

A community school system, furthermore, makes for better control of the total educational system. The collection of fees, the keeping of uniform records and reports, the maintenance of standards of achievement, all of these and more can be more easily enforced and controlled.

How Will Schools Be Financed in a Community School System?

At present, most schools obtain their funds through three sources (1) tuition fees, (2) contributions from the local school board and/or the local community, and (3) subsidies from a central agency. There are many schools which receive no subsidy from the central educational agency and must depend upon the first and second sources only.

If we had an organized Jewish community with a vital Jewish community life and some system of self-taxation, it might be possible to run an entire school system without charging tuition fees. So long, however, as Jewish community life will have to depend upon the voluntary contributions of individual Jews, it will be difficult to get along without charging tuition fees for instruction in our schools. A community school system would provide, however, as is done on an informal basis at present, scholarships for those children unable to afford tuition fees, so as to equalize educational opportunity for all the children in the community.

Schools are finding it increasingly difficult to raise funds from the local community. Even the United Jewish Welfare Fund, as was pointed out above, exerts pressure on local groups to limit all unnecessary campaigns for funds. It might be possible in time to make the subsidy from a central educational agency large enough to eliminate the need for raising money in the local community for each school. However, the question has been raised as to whether, even if such a step were feasible, it would be desirable. There is almost unanimity of opinion among members of school boards and laymen active in Jewish education that, were the problem of raising funds from the local community eliminated completely, there would be a serious diminution of interest and participation on the part of the local school boards and parents of children in the schools. Deficits should be small enough to stimulate interest and activity on the part of the parents and school boards. If too large they dissipate the energies of school board members and discourage their active participation in the school. The plan suggested, therefore would be to have each school board, in cooperation with the centralized agency, draw up a budget and determine what percentage of that budget could conveniently be raised by the school board. The rest of the budget would be covered by tuition fees and the subsidy from the centralized educational agency.

How Would the Schools Be Administered in a Community School System?

The plan the writer would suggest is that the School Board be composed of representatives of the centralized agency, the board of the center, congregation or other association which formerly conducted the school and representatives of the parents of the school. This pattern need not be followed in every commun-

ity. In Los Angeles we have a Yiddish *Mittelschule* sponsored and conducted by the Bureau in cooperation with the three Yiddish groups. On the Board of the School we have representatives of the Bureau, all the three Yiddish groups, the parents of the children and even Yiddish cultural organizations interested in the growth of the school. Too many of our school boards are composed of absentee trustees whose contributions at one time or another helped maintain the particular schools. We need more democratic school boards with greater representation of the pupils' parents and of Jewish residents of the neighborhood.

The Question of Ideological Autonomy

The question has been raised as to whether a community system would destroy the ideological autonomy of the various schools. A community school system as defined above, would exercise administrative control, but would not necessarily impose a set curriculum upon every school, except for the minimum requirements now demanded of all Bureau-affiliated schools. An attempt would be made to conduct the school in accordance with the educational desires of the local community as represented on the School Board. Wherever the local community itself is undecided as to what its policy should be, a survey would be made of the clientele of the school and of the local community to determine what curriculum best expressed the program and philosophy of that particular neighborhood. Different schools in the community school system could have different ideological patterns. Some community schools thus might be large enough to have a diversified program under one roof. A community system might make it possible to house in one building several types of schools. For example, in a school which might be predominantly Hebraic, one teacher might be engaged to give Yiddish instruction to those whose parents desire it for their children, in accordance with the program of the particular Yiddish group. However, an attempt could be made to have as many common activities as possible, such as assemblies, arts and crafts and even history, if it is taught in English. A common school can only develop gradually as a result of groups working together and cannot be imposed from above.

Can All Groups Be Gotten to Unite in a Community School System?

The crucial question is whether the proposition is practical and possible, whether the various groups in the community can be gotten to unite in a community school system. Certainly the present writer, who is daily confronted with the task of working together with representatives of every ideology in Jewish life from the extreme orthodox to the IWO, has no illusions about the obstacles which will have to be overcome to get all the groups in a community to espouse a community school system.

Nevertheless the writer is of the opinion that it can be done. In Los Angeles a panel discussion was held in April on the subject of "Is Los Angeles Jewry Ready for a Community School System?" Although a number of the panelists were invited to participate in the discussion on the assumption that they were opposed to the proposition, it turned out that not only the panelists but the audience as well unanimously endorsed the proposal. The teachers, the parents, the average Jew interested in Jewish life—these are all for it.

Opposition to a community school system will come from several sources in any community. There are always the wealthy Reform and Conservative congregations,

which have large schools (mostly Sunday Schools) adequate budgets and, from their point of view, do not need communal control and supervision. The appeal to these congregations must be on the basis of civic duty and civic unity, on what they can and should contribute to the total educational situation. Actually, however, even their congregational schools can gain a great deal from communal centralization. Practically all of them suffer from a dearth of good teachers. Practically all of them are highly parochial, in a literal sense, being "parish" schools.

The children in their schools need a sense of belongingness to a people, a community, as well as to a particular congregation. All of them need good textbooks, audio-visual aids, PTA bulletins and many other things which no school by itself can undertake to publish. Only a centralized agency can conduct a teacher-training program, publish newspapers, issue guides and texts and other educational materials for teachers, produce educational films, obtain the records necessary for adequate knowledge and study of our schools, tackle the problem of the unschooled and tackle other problems with which it is possible to grapple only on a community basis.

Opposition will come from the Yiddish "party" schools, whether they be those of the Jewish National Workers Alliance, the Workmen's Circle or the Jewish People's Fraternal Order of the I. W. O. Local policies are dictated from the national offices of those organizations in New York (this is true of Los Angeles despite its remoteness from New York, though less true than of other communities). Each group, in the interests of its own survival, naturally wants to maintain separate schools and even separate centers. But as they dwindle in size and numbers, as the cost of maintenance rises, the task of maintaining separate small schools becomes a burden almost too great to bear. In a community like Los Angeles the ideological differences between the groups become more blurred from year to year. When it comes to the homes and the children, the differences are startlingly slight. Yiddish for the most part is not spoken in the home and must be taught like a foreign language or like Hebrew. There is no Yiddish speaking youth to replace the present members of these organizations, whose constituency becomes older from year to year.

As a result, increasing numbers of leaders in these groups have come to recognize that, unless the Yiddish groups work together, they will each disappear separately. The establishment of Community Yiddish High Schools in Los Angeles and Detroit and other communities in which all of the Yiddish groups cooperate is no isolated phenomenon. In Detroit an attempt is being made to merge three types of Yiddish schools on an elementary school level as well.

The plan as envisaged above preserves ideological autonomy and calls for mergers of small schools of *similar* ideology only when necessary and possible. Many "party" schools can and will exist within a community school system. But if, when and where, mergers are necessary, the experiences cited above indicate a readiness to work together on the part of groups hitherto considered irreconcilable in their differences. In Los Angeles at least, the Yiddish groups will probably agree to enter a community school system as defined above, much sooner than some of our wealthy congregations.

Opposition may be encountered from Jewish Centers which house schools. For the most part these schools obtain their funds from the community and are not faced with the problem of raising that portion of the budget which

must come from the local community. Center school boards naturally want to retain control of their schools, a control which comes to them at a low cost. They also point to practical difficulties which would be encountered in sundering the school from Center control and placing it under the auspices of a communal educational agency, such as the problem of housing, of fiscal integration, of integration of programs, of membership, of use of personnel. These difficulties are real and will have to be met, but they should not constitute an impediment to the establishment of a community school system. Since the Center derives its funds ultimately from the community, the community will have to determine what is the best disposition to make of center schools and what educational system will best serve the interests of the entire community.

Similar opposition from other groups will have to be met and dealt with. The strongest opposition will come from the wealthy "assimilationists" within Community Councils, Federations and Welfare Funds. These will oppose it on the grounds of cost and for other "practical" reasons, which do have validity; but the unconscious motivation of their opposition to such a proposition will be that they really do not want "Jewish life abundant" and want but a minimum of Jewish life on the educational, cultural and communal level. To the extent that Community Councils and Federations are democratized, these individuals can be outvoted, though their opposition, because of their wealth, and prestige, should not be underestimated.

The Urgency of the Problem

The inexorable trend of American-Jewish life will, however, drive us toward the solution proposed. A community school system does not have to follow the pattern described above. It may take different forms in different communities depending upon their size, local history and traditions and the like. Some of us act in the faith that eternity is on our side. I wish it were true. It seems to me, however, that the forces of assimilation and disintegration are at present proceeding at a faster pace than the counter forces making for preservation and cultural growth. We must infuse our discussions and our actions with a sense of urgency or we shall be compelled to write off three of the five millions of Jews in the United States, insofar as their contributions to creative Jewish survival in America are concerned.

I think it will be generally agreed that the Jew individually and collectively is, more than any other person or group, a fighter for "one world," for cooperative commonwealths, for social justice. He, more than any other person, has come to recognize the stupidity or danger of isolation in any form—political, national, economic, or cultural. Yet when it comes to our own group life we often tend to split into an infinite number of parties, to guard our individualities as congregations, as religious bodies, as organizations, to compete militantly for the point of view we espouse or the group to which we owe loyalty. Surely we Jews should recognize that we cannot afford isolationism or individualism. We must have unity at least in our educational and cultural life, if not in our religious and political life. At this time, more than at any other time in our history, we must heed the advice of our sages: "Separate not thyself from the community."

Are There Moral Absolutes?

By JACK J. COHEN

ONE of the manifestations of the spiritual unrest of our times is the search for a firm foundation for ideals. In widely different circles there is an effort to find the most effective insulation for fundamental beliefs from adverse criticism. Orthodox theologians, in the face of an idealistic but secularist democratic ethics, are conducting an all-out campaign to revive the authority of metaphysical tenets. In the United States their efforts have been directed toward "proving" that democratic ideals rest upon certain theological presuppositions. One of their main techniques has been to attack the ability of science to provide democracy with a sufficiently strong rationale. The naturalists have rallied to the defense of the scientific method with an insistence that the only satisfactory rationale for ideals must stem from "an investigation into the causes, interrelations and consequences of values in specific situations of trouble." (Sidney Hook: "The Philosophic Scene," *Commentary,* June, 1946.) Among radicals there is likewise a reconsideration of ethics. In December 1945, *Politics,* a radical monthly, began a series entitled, "New Roads in Politics." The tenor of this series has been to challenge the basic premises of the Marxist approach to ethics. Some of the contributors, notably Dwight MacDonald, have called for an acceptance of moral absolutes, albeit with no religious references.

Absolutism in Marxist Ethics

Helen Constas, for example, states that "Ethics need not be based on the supra-human sanctions of religion or other metaphysical systems of thought. Rather, scientific ethics can be based on the fact that humanity requires for its physical and psychological happiness the realization of the ethical standards of socialism—peace, freedom, social equality, self-development, etc. . . ." ("A Critique of Marxian Ideology," *Politics,* January 1946.) This same Miss Constas asserts that socialism was as valid in the time of Caesar as it is now. Implied in this approach is the absolute character of ethics. Although ideals "can be derived directly from the physical and psychological needs of human beings," they are nonetheless absolute, since, in the eyes of Miss Constas, they pertain with equal validity to situations widely different in time and space. MacDonald is most explicit in saying that his ethical dynamic "comes from absolute and non-historical values, such as Truth and Justice, rather than from the course of history." "The Root Is Man," *Politics, April* 1946.)

That an absolutist approach should emerge from a journal that began its career a few years ago with a revised Marxian ideology should not surprise us. The ethics of Marxism also has absolutist elements; and those who abandon Marxism are prone to accept other absolutist positions. A defender of Marxism, David T. Bazelon, quotes Marx to the effect that "Right can *never* be superior to the economic development and the stage of civilization conditioned thereby." (Discussion, *Politics,* July 1946. Italics mine, J.J.C.) Bazelon then goes on to say, "To disagree wtih this statement, one must maintain that moral behavior is unconditioned by the historical environment. But this is only a delusion of the idealistic mind." In other words, Marxism asserts that all ethics are absolutely determined by the

situation found at a particular place and time in history. It implies that to speak of the right for all to eat at a time when a scarcity economy prevails, is to deal in wishful thinking. Freedom from want is an ideal not to be advanced when it cannot be achieved. This is absurd, of course, for ethical ideals are rarely descriptions of existing modes of behavior. Rather are they projections into the future. Now Marx was undoubtedly thinking of the lack of moral significance in an "ought" beyond human control. There is no moral compulsion on mankind to send a plane to the moon, but there is a moral compulsion on man to eradicate social evils, even if the techniques are for the moment beyond human ability to master. Right, in this sense, is *always* superior to any stage of civilization.

It can readily be seen that this absolutist element of Marxism in no way accounts for the frequent difference in ethical outlooks of two persons born and raised in the same environment. Nor is it correct to assume that, if one introduces an element of ethical creativity or inspiration into a situation which seems to be unprepared for an ethical innovation, one thereby denies all possibility of conditioning. Einstein could not have made his contributions to physics without the previous contributions of others. But it is also pertinent to add that his work on relativity cannot be wholly attributed to the state of modern scientific knowledge. There was, after all, need for Einstein's creative genius. Similarly, in the realm of ethics, the enunciation of the ideal of peace called for a certain amount of previous ethical development. Nevertheless, the prophets cannnot be explained simply by an analysis of the class situation in which they found themselves. Isaiah and Amos, stemming from the upper and lower classes respectively, each took a stand against economic oppression.

Relativism in Marxist Philosophy

On the other hand, Marxist ethics is also represented by a relativist theory which denies the existence of any standard of conduct that should apply to all classes or groups even within a particular social unit. Ethical ideals exercise no mandatory influence. Thus during the period of the Russo-German pact, fascism became a matter of "taste." When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, anti-fascism became a moral duty. Freedom of speech and press is the constant concern of American Communists, while it is strictly limited in Russia. These concrete expressions of Stalinist doctrine may not truly express the ethical implications of Marxism. A democratic socialist, for example, can and does construct an entirely different ethical position. All that I have tried to indicate here is that the so-called "relativism" of the Communist brand of ethics leads inevitably to the doctrinaire attitudes and actions of the Stalin dictatorship. "If in capitalism the commodity is God and the laws of its price and value reign supreme, so under the Soviet system the party and its bureaucracy have grown into the Supreme Being to be blindly adored and obeyed". (Frank Fisher: "Can Socialism Be Humanized?", *Politics*, February 1946). This absolutism has expressed itself in Russia not only in ethics but in art and science as well. Both art and science have been placed in the straitjacket shaped by the needs of the Stalin dictatorship. The Russian culture purge forcefully illustrates this fact. If ethics can so easily be manipulated to justify the actions of a particular regime, then it becomes a powerful instrument in preserving that regime. Such use develops an absolutism in practice which is as dangerous as theoretical absolutism.

Marxism has taken its stand in behalf of the oppressed, with no questions asked. The Marxist refuses to inquire why it is

proper for the majority, oppressed group to enhance itself at the expense of the minority oppressors, and not vice versa. He sees no need to challenge the Aristotelian assumption that some men are born to be slaves. Sufficient for the masses is the fact that objective circumstances have led to the class struggle. It is inevitable that the worker support his class. The consciousness of his plight, his sense of justice, and his call to duty in behalf of his fellow-workers are all different aspects of the same phenomenon and are completely determined by his station in life. There is no objective reality which can be termed justice, except in terms of a class situation. The ethical difficulty of this aspect of the Marxist system is that it leads inevitably to the use of any means to the triumph of the proletarian revolution. Unless an ethical system finds room for the sanctity of individuals, irrespective of their class, it will deteriorate into the nihilism characteristic of the police state.

Anti-Stalinist Marxists struggle to place ethics on a more responsible plane. They try to divest ethics of any absolutism and at the same time to preserve its egalitarian aspects. Philip Spratt "Marxism and Ethics," (*Politics, March* 1946), says that, "A relativistic ethics is no ethics. One of the standard ways of destroying confidence in moral laws is to show that they differ in various social conditions." Ethics must, in other words, provide a criterion which can be applied in different situations. "We organize an hierarchy of values, but also see that human nature varies, and so claim that each man has a right, at least within very wide limits, to the kind of life he prefers. Accordingly, the doctrine of welfare, while asserting the basic common needs, health, food, etc., becomes beyond that equivalent to the demand for opportunity to develop the personality—that is, freedom." Vernon Venable in his book, "Human Nature; the Marxian View," puts this same idea in these words: "It (human activity) should aim at the transformation of human nature. It should make men dignified, integrated, complete and free, so that the resources and potentialities that reside in men no less than in all other natural realms of this dialectical universe, develop, expand, and find fruitful expression. So much is evident from the Marxian criticism of the present. And obviously we have here the basis for a humanist ethics."

Both Spratt and Venable make no effort to analyze further the origin of the right to develop personality. It appears to be an assumption inferred from the varieties of human nature. The Marxist finds no need to ask whether that assumption is logically derived from the premise that human nature varies. Actually there is no logical basis upon which to infer that because human beings differ they must have the right to develop themselves according to their own interests. The right to self-fulfillment is a moral judgment imposed by our own intuition (call it what you will) on the facts of life. Even if such a judgment could be shown to derive completely from human heterogeneity, this fact could not be used to justify the judgment. But ideals are conceived in, rather than derived from nature. They are acts of faith for which there can be no experimental proof. From history, one is as much justified in holding up tyranny as an ideal as in exalting freedom. The belief in freedom may have emerged at a relatively late period in history, but we cannot affirm from this fact that it evolves from history in any logical fashion. All that one can say is that it emerges in history in the consciousness of man who then reads it back into history in the form of purpose.

While Marxism has its absolutes, they are always assumed as basic premises with-

out any satisfactory effort to ground them in any metaphysical system. Dialectical materialism explains, to the satisfaction of the Marxist, if not of others, the historical process. But it cannot explain why a man ought to aim at a peace-loving society rather than a militaristic one. Soviet Russia wants peace, say the Russian diplomats. However, peace seems to be a wish shared by many peoples and many classes, rich and poor, exploiters and workers. Yet history has never produced a universal peace. Nor will such a condition ever be achieved unless men will it. But why peace and not war? Since history affords evidence that either ideal can result from the affairs of men, why assume that one is more desirable? One can answer only if one has some standard of judgment other than the historical process. The ultimate refuge of the Marxist is the needs and ideals of the proletariat.

These Marxist approaches, of the Stalinist and of many anti-Stalinists, either stem as we have seen, from a mechanistic interpretation of reality or lead to a justification of moral authoritarianism. The events of the twentieth century, which rendered false Marx's predictions concerning the course of the class struggle, have highlighted the weaknesses of the monistic position for which Marx laid the groundwork. (The monism was more a result of his disciples' thinking than his own. As a matter of fact, both Marx and Engels went to some lengths to dispel the notion that economic materialism and historical materialism were synonymous terms.) Nevertheless, Marx and Marxism have made distinct contributions to ethical thought. They have developed an awareness that the ethics of any group is bound to be affected by material conditions. Since Marx, social science has almost come into it own. Before him, the control of human behavior was left to religious influences on man's free will. Since Marx, more and more of the areas of human thought and behavior have been investigated and controlled. Marxism, as a matter of fact, has caused matters to be placed on the agenda of ethical thought, formerly beyond its perspective. For example, competition versus a cooperative economy is now a subject for ethics as well as a concern of political economy. The effects of each system of enterprise on human character must be studied by anyone desiring to ethicize social relations. And finally, Marx served the cause of ethics well by emphasizing that "today's true ethical problem is not one of interpreting the good abstractly but one of creating it concretely in society."

Prophetic Ethics and Marx's Critique of Religion

Prophetic religion attempted to set up goals, in the light of which, human behavior should be judged. This function of religion has been grossly misunderstood. It has been demonstrated time and again by Jewish scholars that the Torah is as important as, if not more important than, the Prophetic Writings. The Torah abounds with legislation aimed at achieving social goals, some of which were later poetically proclaimed by the Prophets. Tradition made the mistake of assuming that the concrete legislation of the Torah was sufficiently foresighted to deal with any change in circumstances. As time went on, the breach between the sentiments of the Prophets and the material conditions under which people lived became pronounced. Preachers declared that the reason prophetic ideals were unattained was because the Torah was not observed. Hence the call to return was repeated throughout the centuries. Other religious traditions, which held many of the prophetic beliefs, suffered from the same reliance on a revealed code of behavior. In this way, there developed

through the centuries, the misconception that prophetic ideals were a *means* to salvation, rather than a goal for which other means had to be devised.

Marx broke through this closed system of thought by indicating the radical changes that had to be made before human salvation could be attained. At the same time, he made the mistake of identifying the aims of prophetic religion with the means employed by the orthodox sects. He thought he was freeing himself completely from the religious opiate, but the goals toward which he strove were within the frame of reference of prophetic ethics. Because organized religion was allied to the ruling class, or was, at least, used by that class, Marx dogmatically held that religion was essentially reactionary and was doomed to extinction with the rest of bourgeois civilization. Events have shown, however, that the mentality of the proletariat is as much bound by bourgeois conventions as any other segment of the population. The revolt against the masters is thus not a matter of bestirring an already conscious class of oppressed; it calls for a complete reorientation in the thinking of the workers.

Modern democratic institutions, at least in the United States, render it most unlikely that the capitalist class will find it possible to achieve the degree of totalitarian control essential to creating the spirit of revolt among the masses. And even should such dictatorial control be forthcoming, it will develop opposition on the religious front as well. Nazi totalitarianism does not spare the institutions of religion any more than those of the working class. There is no longer, in democratic countries, any clear-cut alignment of religion and the ruling class. The NAM has spent many thousands of dollars trying to convert liberal clergymen to its cause. Marxist ethics, which finds the salvation of the world in the interests of the working class, is based on a false assumption: namely, that objective class distinctions are reflected in the consciousness of these classes. Far truer is it to state that ethical consciousness transcends social groupings. The world is divided into progressives and reactionaries—and they are to be found among all classes of our society. It seems, therefore, that a rational ethics would require any advocate of progressivism (or radicalism) to operate on and with all the crucial institutions of society rather than seek to bring about a new order through reliance on the workers alone.

Does a Religious Ethics Demand Absolute Moral Postulates?

Two questions remain. How can we religionists justify our belief in justice, peace, the sanctity of the individual, etc.? And what do each of these ideals signify? Our failure to answer these questions to date seems to me to result from our attempts to give priority to the first question, rather than the second. We assumed we were clear about the content of our ideals and then were surprised when others adopted opposing positions. A sense of justice can lead to militarism or pacifism. A love of peace can lead to acceptance of oppression or violent revolution. The truth is that religious goals themselves have been obscured. The time has come for religious thinkers to develop prophetic religion anew by starting with concrete human situations and evaluating them with the critical instruments of the scientific method. We can aim at clearly defined objectives. Idealism and political action will then find a common meeting ground. In the course of this investigation we shall find that religion has one fundamental principle—the right to a full life for all. No matter where one stands in ethical theory, one inevitably returns to this single basic tenet of faith, for whose justification one must rely on the type of

intuition described by Eugene Kohn. ("The Quest for Religious Truth," *The Reconstructionist,* Vol. XII, No. II.) This belief, however, justifies no particular ethical doctrine built around it. Justice, peace, security, are all meaningful goals, only when they are defined in terms of the right to a full life. What constitutes the legitimate elements of a full life can only be determined by scientific, experimental examinations of human needs and the ways of meeting them. Moral absolutes give way to a single principle which in turn acts as a kind of shell whose contents are changed from time to time. The right to a full life is fundamental to all ethical systems, but it can prove valuable to ethical theory only insofar as it serves to help the process of scientific inquiry into each situation.

There are, then, no moral absolutes in the sense of general postulates that are valid in all situations. Nevertheless, all our actions point to our belief that there is an absolute distinction between moral and immoral in each situation. Whether we have achieved moral solutions of particular problems, however, cannot be ascertained by any reference to abstract ethical categories. Class consciousness, a drive for universal peace, a desire to free the slaves—all of these must be understood in terms of specific considerations, as the naturalist suggests. But we must concede that the universal prevalence of some socially shared attitudes on these questions is indicative of an innate human need for some form of social organization. The drive for self-fulfillment seems to be a fundamental characteristic of men who cherish life. Where consciousness exists, chaos is an irritant. But there are different types of order. The Marxist has a preconceived notion of the "right" order. Soviet Russia has not yet validated his argument. The orthodox religionist speaks in the name of abstractions which are often helpful in criticizing existing evils but which never point the way to concrete solutions of specific problems. The only answer to the question of the validation of ethical principles can be found in analyzing their source in the conception of self-fulfillment held by the individual or group, determining their validity in the light of our knowledge of the physical and mental worlds and estimating their future effects on human organization. If the question is raised that it is sometimes necessary to act without such long range examination of a problem, we can reply that only the development of our ethical position through the painstaking procedure outlined will insure more intelligent spot decisions. Meanwhile, religionists are making high-sounding abstract ethical pronouncements and acting in ways not calculated to render them effective. There is no God-given, absolute road to goodness and the quicker we learn it the better. That we can achieve a world of decency is a belief which separates the religious man from the cynic. But to hold that this can be accomplished on the basis of any yet conceived system of ethics shows either a failure to deal honestly with the complexity of human life or a vicious desire to impose one's own personal formula on the rest of the world.

Random Thoughts

IF we want to solve the problem of diversity *in* Judaism, we must have a University *of* Judaism.

* * *

When a historian like Toynbee begins to theologize, we get a theology as crude as would be the history written by a theologian like Barth.

* * *

The fact that the bright side of the moon has some spots does not justify worrying what is on the other side of it.

Likewise the fact that there are flaws in our reasoning is no excuse for resorting to mysticism.

* * *

In a changing world, the leaders of a passing order usually waste their energies fighting the emerging order instead of using them to qualify for the new type of leadership.

In ancient times the Saducee leaders, whose way of life was centered in the Temple, wasted their energies fighting the way of life centered in the Torah.

Nowadays the old time Rav, who functioned in a segregated Jewish life, is still combating the westernization of that life.

And lately, the rabbis who minister to congregations try foolishly to stop the development of the Jewish communal centers, instead of reorganizing the entire structure of American Jewish life, so as to find room in it for as many types of Jewish fellowship as conditions demand

* * *

Some of our fellow-Jews in the South seem to forget that, by accepting the anti-Negro prejudices of their White neighbors, they are helping to spread the evil of race hatred which will ultimately turn both Whites and Negroes against them.

* * *

With Judaism as a three thousand year old civilization, the state of Jewish knowledge in this country may be described as one in which "never did so many know so little about so much."

* * *

There is as much difference in principle between Democrats and Republicans as between the instalment plan and the deferred payment plan, or between an undertaker and a mortician.

* * *

Where there is no diversity there is no freedom.

* * *

Human beings are the only creatures of circumstances that are also creators of circumstances.

* * *

It takes considerable sophistication to de-sophisticate ourselves.

* * *

A whole mountain of uranium cannot compare in effectiveness with an atom bomb the size of a billiard ball.

That only goes to show how much more powerful an organized minority can be than an apathetic majority.

* * *

"Modern man is obsolete," said Norman Cousins after the Hiroshima Deathday.

The events since seem to have proved that obsolete man has become quite modern.

* * *

Adam is Everyman and Eve is Everywoman. The Garden of Eden is Every-

where, and the fruit of good and evil is Everylicense. The Serpent is Everytemper, and God speaking to Adam is Every protest against lawlessness.

* * *

What we ordinarily speak of as the fragmentizing effect of civilization upon human life is, in the language of religion, referred to as the Fall of Man.

As with Humpty Dumpty who had a great fall, all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put civilized man together again.

But what the King's horses and the King's men cannot do, the King Himself can do.

This is why we need religion.

* * *

According to Bertrand Russell solemn people are generally humbugs.

But even he would admit that solemn people at least do not humbug themselves, which is just what cynics do.

M. M. K.

Book Notes

RASHI AS AN EDUCATOR

MASTER OF TROYES—A Study of Rashi the Educator, by Samuel M. Blumenfield. Published for the Jewish Institute of Religion by Behrman House, Philadelphia, New York, 1946. $3.50.

IT is worthy of note that while Jews traditionally regarded study as nothing less than a divine command, the history of Jewish education was, until recently, a subject that received scant attention at the hands of Jewish scholars. This lack is now being filled by a growing shelf of books that deal with one or another of the epochs of Jewish education. The present work is the first, however, in which one of the great interpreters of the classics in Jewish literature is viewed as an educator. When one contemplates the fact that Rashi never wrote on education *per se*—his remarks on the subject always take the form of interpretation of a text—the problems of methodology involved in such an undertaking are self-evident. Two approaches to the subject are possible.

One can cull from the commentaries those statements that pertain to education, organize them under proper subheadings, compare them with the Talmudic and Gaonic views, regard them in the light of the Jewish education in vogue in Rashi's day, and, finally, see them in the total perspective of the history of secular education past and present. Dr. Blumenfield has chosen this approach and it has yielded a clear, engaging book that might well serve as a model for similar studies of other great bearers of the tradition as educators. To the book, the author has appended an extended list of quotations from Rashi relating to the theme at hand. These are quoted in the original, admirable in itself, and skillfully translated. The author thus makes the title *educator* fit most aptly one whom Jews have always regarded as *"Parshandatha,"* the interpreter *par excellance.*

The method described above suffers, however, from one insuperable limitation. The ever present and largely unanswerable question is: To what extent do Rashi's comments reflect his own views and the

practices current in his time and how far are they merely the elucidation of an ancient text? Our author is aware of this problem and seeks to meet it as far as it can be met. There is another approach, one that circumvents this limitation. A comprehensive picture of Rashi as an educator could emerge from an evaluation of his commentaries as textbooks, which indeed they were for generations. In this regard, Dr. Blumenfield limits himself to a general characterization of Rashi's commentary on the *Pentateuch.*

One feels that, had the center of interest been focused here, an analysis of the commentaries would yield a striking picture of the pedagogic principles that guided Rashi in their writing. The most popular super-commentary on Rashi, *Sifte Hakhamim,* assumes that practically every comment of Rashi is intended to answer a question which might occur to the student in the course of his study of the text. Within moderate limits, the assumption is correct. Even Rashi's quotations and paraphrases of the Midrash appear to be deliberately chosen with this forethought. One recalls how often the words *lamah* (why?) *mah taam* (for what reason?) occur in his selections from the Midrash. Do we not have here the pedagogic device of interest? When we were first introduced to Rashi, the old Rebbe would remind us repeatedly that Rashi never wrote a superfluous word; or, as he put it in true Rabbinic hyperbole, one must scrutinize every drop of ink that Rashi put on paper. Such scrutiny of his commentaries would reveal — at least that is our hunch, — a very definite method, one founded on a genuine native insight into the psychology of learning. May it not be that the commentaries exercized such universal appeal precisely because they were based on sound pedagogic method? An exposition of that method would be instructive and would have added much to Dr. Blumenfield's study.

But if there is *makom lehitgadder bo,* (room for elaboration), there is much to welcome in this broadly conceived and vividly written contribution to the history of one of Israel's greatest teachers. If the style is the man, then certainly the teacher is the man. From behind this portrait of Rashi the educator, there appears Rashi the man,—warm and attractive. Whether or not the author had so intended, this aspect of the book renders it eminently readable, a quality much to be desired in books of Jewish learning.

THEODORE FRIEDMAN

BOOKS RECEIVED

COOPERATIVE PALESTINE — The Story of Histadrut, by Samuel Kurland, with a foreword by Joseph Schlossberg. Contains a history and description of the General Federation of Jewish workers in Palestine, with all its ramifications. Illustrated. Has appendix containing the Statutes of Histadrut and a bibliography xii + 276 pp. Published by Sharon Books, for the National Committee for Labor Palestine. New York, 1947. $3.00.

AMERICAN OVERTURE — Jewish Rights in Colonial Times, by Abraham Vossen Goodman, reviews the colonial period of American history for the light it sheds on the development of religious liberty as an American ideal. vii + 265 pp., with notes, bibliography and index. Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1947. $3.00.

TALES OF YORE, by Rabbi Markus Lehman, four stories from the life of Rabbi Joselman of Rosheim, in the 16th century, 68 pp. paper binding, one of the Jewish Pocket Books, published by the Spero Foundation for Agudath Israel Youth Council of America, New York. 25¢.

POLISH JEWS, a Pictorial Record, by Roman Vishniac, contains 31 reproductions of art photographs, with an introductory essay "The Inner World of the Polish Jew," by Abraham J. Heschel Schocken Books, New York, 1947. $3.75.

JEWISH COMMUNITY DIRECTORY, of Greater New York, edited by Reuben Fink and Bernard G. Richards, religious, cultural, educational and other leading agencies, 62 pp., published by The Jewish Information Bureau, New York, 1947. $1.50.

IT'S TIME TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH, by David ben Yosefon, discusses the Jewish situation in the modern world. 108 pp., Harbinger House, New York. $2.00.